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death). Captain, see this sword; it is now three years since it has been constantly exercised in chastising my enemies; it is indeed almost blunt with use; but it shall be continued to the same till they are utterly dispersed. Do not talk of assistance. I require none. The Peguans I can wipe away as thus (drawing the palm of one hand over the other). See these arms and this thigh (drawing his loose coat-sleeve up to the armpit, and lifting his pasoh, so as to display a bare tattooed leg); amongst a thousand you cannot see my match. I can crush a hundred such as the King of Pegu." (Quoted from Crawford.)

Two years later he talked to Ensign Lester in the same bombastic strain, telling him that he would go to Madras, and that if a nine-pounder shot was to hit him it could do him no harm, with a good deal more to the same effect. He is described at this time, when he was about forty-five years of age, as five feet eleven in height, and of a powerful build, with a long, but not a thin face, the expression not being improved by a number of smallpox pitmarks. He had a broad but very retreating forehead, a characteristic shared by all his descendants, and prominent in the case of King Mindôn.

Alaungpaya, then, was no feeble founder of the present line of successors to the great Mahā Thamada. He certainly had the power to command, and his military successes carried the peacock flag from far away towards Dacca, down to the Siamese capital. Assuredly he was a worthy follower of the great first king, and the Burmese believed firmly in the unbroken character of the succession. Accordingly all the old Indian and Sakyan customs were carefully observed by the Burmese royal family. Such were the marriage with half-sisters, and the consequent preserving unmarried of the king's eldest daughter; the reverence of the three most excellent animals, the peacock of the sun, the hare of the moon, and the kalawaik, the carrying bird of Vishnu, whose eyes like jewels look friendly on the stranger; and the beit-theit, the consecration by pouring out of water at the accession. Marriage with half-sisters was only allowed to the king, not to the people at large, or even to the princes of the blood-royal. The throne was painted over with representations of

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175 into in the remorse caused by the massacres of February 1879, he was assuredly not a confirmed drunkard. His worst fault was that he was easy, or call it weak-spirited if you like. It is an open secret that he was not intended to be king. His father, Mindôn Min, had a strong liking for the young yahan, but his intention, if he had any, was that the pious and well-read Nyaungyan prince, who died a refugee at Barrackpore, near Calcutta, was to be his successor, and if the court or the town had been polled, the choice would have fallen on the same burly, good-natured individual.

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[835] It must be understood that, notwithstanding the precautions for the preservation of the pure blood-royal, the system of keeping a princess tabindaing, to be married to the new ruler, it by no means followed that the eldest son of this union, or, indeed, any son by this queen at all, necessarily succeeded to the throne. It was not often that there was a recognised Eingshemin, an heir-apparent to the throne, but when there was such a dignitary, he might be the fifth, or the tenth, or the thirtieth son, the only stipulation being that he should be the child of one of the four chief queens. The nomination rested with the king. A consideration of the gruesome history of the parricide kings, who reigned in one of the countries of the Myissi Madetha, the middle country, as India is called, each of whom ascended a throne stained with a father's blood, until the horrified populace of Pataliputra revolted and exterminated the whole house; the reading of this bloody chapter in the royal annals may have prompted the custom, but it is certain that it is not often that the heir to the throne was recognised. Mindôn made no
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175 sign till his last illness came upon him. Then when it was evident that he could not survive, he named the Nyaungyan mintha and after him the yellow-robed Thibaw prince. Then palace intrigue began. The Thibaw prince, it was well known, had a passion for the tabindaing, Selin Supaya (Selina Sophia as she was called by some of the English residents in Mandalay), and the second of the Supayās, for there were three of them, was equally enamoured of the young Patama Byan. Therefore the